

## Bright Votes to Prevent Severe Cuts in Medicare, Tricare

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Bobby Bright voted today to prevent a severe cut in Medicare and Tricare, ensuring that seniors and veterans will continue to have access to the doctors of their choice. The Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act will permanently reform the Medicare payment system to doctors, repealing a 21% cut in payments to physicians scheduled to occur in January. Doctors treating veterans covered under Tricare are subject to the same payment rates. The bill passed by a 243 – 183 margin and now goes to the Senate for consideration.

“Passing the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act is absolutely essential for seniors and veterans across the country,” Bright said. “It is unconscionable that we could allow a 21% cut to the Medicare physician payment rate and endanger seniors’ choice of doctor. Doctors and seniors have expressed strong support for reforming the payment rate and the bill passed today will prevent any cuts and permanently solve this problem. This will ensure stability for seniors, veterans, doctors, and other health care professionals. Medicare and Tricare recipients will continue to receive the quality of care they deserve.”

Over the last several years, Congress has been forced to prevent significant cuts to the Medicare physician payment rate, as determined by the Sustainable Growth Rate. These cuts could have forced many doctors to stop treating Medicare and Tricare patients due to high costs. The bill passed today stops the scheduled cut for next year, and establishes a new rate that will not be subject to future, unsustainable cuts.

"We are very appreciative of Congressman Bright's vote for the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act," Medical Association of Alabama (MASA) Spokesman Niko Corley said. "There is no question that the Congressman supports and stands with physicians,

seniors and military families in Alabama. His vote today ensures that doctors in Alabama can continue to deliver the same high quality of care to Medicare and Tricare patients across the state that they deserve and have come to expect. We commend his leadership on this issue, and we urge the Senate to quickly pass this legislation to prevent drastic cuts to doctors' payment rates that could irreparably damage their ability to continue providing care to their patients."

"Congressman Bright has been a strong and consistent supporter of our senior citizens," said Robert Crowder, Executive Director of the Southern Alabama Regional Council on Aging in Dothan. "He understands the importance of seniors keeping the doctor of their choice and having the assurance that Medicare will always cover their health care needs. I applaud him for his leadership on this issue and his strong support of seniors throughout Alabama."

Reforming the Sustainable Growth Rate has long been cited as one of the top priorities for numerous medical and seniors' organizations. As a result, the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act is supported by American Medical Association (including MASA), the AARP, the Military Officers Association of America, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, the American College of Surgeons, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, the Medicare Rights Center, and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

"For too long now, previous Congresses have kicked the can down the road and refused to fully address the Medicare physician payment rate, forcing this Congress to make a tough vote on this issue," Bright said. "I am pleased we are providing a permanent fix to this long-time problem rather than just another one-year patch. In my opinion, the right thing to do- regardless of partisan politics- was to pass this bill to give seniors, veterans, and doctors needed peace of mind about their health care decisions."